



ENCATC

The European network on cultural management and policy

CULTURAL POLICY TRACKER

Issue N° 1 | April 2022



CREATIVE WORKERS ■ CREATIVE POLICY-MAKING ■ SINGAPORE

IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ■ INTERMEDIARY CULTURAL SPACES

The pandemic crisis has shown us how essential art and culture are to our lives, how they make us connect across walls and differences, and how much they are the very foundation of our societies and our humanity. This insight must not be forgotten, and it must be reflected on the political decision-making level, now and in the future. There is no return to "the old normal", but there is now an opportunity, a necessity even, to rethink the value and centrality of arts and culture to us individuals, communities, nations, the European Union. Recent scholarly work has tended to stress the importance of more participatory and transparent approaches to cultural policy-making and indeed our membership asked ENCATC to be more involved in the shaping of cultural policy of the future and to be able to impact policy development and cultural policies that are responsive to culture and creative sectors' local needs.

In April 2020, in order to contribute to the development of **evidence-based cultural policies** – applied research to serve policy design – promoting and advocating for innovative policies and practices in the cultural and creative sectors in the post covid-19 era, ENCATC set up a new Think Tank bringing together culture and education institutions from across Europe willing to contribute both to the better understanding and deeper knowledge of COVID-19's various impacts. In addition, the newly established **Think Tank Culture Post covid-19** will be crucial for engaging the cultural management and policy community with other networks and stakeholders in a **global scale** to transform the conversation around climate change and translate it into **research-based policy actions**. To this end, the Think Tank meetings will be open to representatives America and Asia and thus to integrate in the Think Tank best practices and innovative ideas to tackle the climate change challenges from other world regions perspectives

At date, the Think Tank is made up of a diverse group of professionals, academics, researchers and representatives of EU cultural networks and universities. They are interested to gather, analyse, and come away with robust findings for evidence-based policy recommendations that could allow the Cultural sector to better navigate during the current and future turbulent times.

In this framework, the Cultural Policy Tracker is a quarterly publication gathering contributions from the members of the Think Tank and widely disseminated to policy makers.

In this first issue, a total of five articles are presented. The first two focus on the creative workers and their working conditions, and advocate for the need to put this issue at the center of policy making. More specifically, Dr Roberta Comunian and Dr Lauren England, from King's College London, signed the article "Putting Creative Workers at the centre of local creative policy-making", while Tassos Mallios and Gabriele Rosana, from Culture Action Europe, write on "The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Working Conditions in the CCSI: a Long-lasting Threat or a Unique Opportunity for Action?".

The third article, on its turn, is signed by Dr Matina Magkou, post-doctoral researcher at the University Côte d'Azur, and focuses "On the policy potential of intermediary cultural spaces around Covid-19 times".

The last two articles are grouped in the section "Focus: Singapore", and approach the cultural reality of the Asian country. Audrey Wong, from Lasalle College of the Arts, is the author of the article titled "Cultural Policy Highlights of Singapore's Covid-19 Pandemic Response", and Michelle Loh, also from from Lasalle College of the Arts, explores "Superdiversity and cultural policies in postpandemic Singapore".

We would like to acknowledge the authors' contribution to this new publication and thank them for their insightful analysis of the sector and its needs in these turbulent times, which give clear guidance for policy makers about the most pressing issues to be addressed for the sector's sustainability.

Yours truly,

GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens
ENCATC Secretary General

02

Editorial

03

Putting Creative Workers
at the centre of local
creative policy-making

12

The Impact of the covid-19
Pandemic on Working
Conditions in the CCSI: a Long-
lasting Threat or a Unique
Opportunity for Action?

22

On the policy potential of
intermediary cultural spaces
around covid-19 times

30

"Emerging stronger":
Cultural Policy Highlights
of Singapore's covid-19
Pandemic Response

39

Superdiversity and
cultural policies in post-
pandemic Singapore



PUTTING CREATIVE WORKERS AT THE CENTRE OF LOCAL CREATIVE POLICY-MAKING

DR ROBERTA COMUNIAN AND DR LAUREN ENGLAND
KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

The covid-19 pandemic has re-shaped the way most of us live and work. However, for some, including creative and cultural workers, it has exposed issues of precarity (Comunian and England, 2020) and heightened the need for new collectivism and to rethink working practices (Tanghetti et al. 2022). That said, it has also created an opportunity for reflecting on structural intervention, holding open space for hope, new forms of care and new political imaginations (Gross, 2022) which will be vital for re-building the local creative economies of our cities.

Often, policy initiatives under broader umbrellas such as the 'creative city', or 'recovery strategies' remain quite superficial in their understanding of creative workers and their needs and are not able to fully consider the breadth of creative employment (including many sectors across the economy) but also the range of values and objectives that drive creative work. However, awareness of the central role of culture and the challenges faced by creative and cultural workers has undoubtedly grown during the pandemic and is starting to be reflected in policy. For example, the [European Parliament's resolution for Cultural Recovery in Europe \(2020\)](#) emphasises the strategic role of culture in economic terms, but also its key role in fostering processes of social change and cohesion and the impact of the pandemic on both of these areas. Importantly, **the European framework recognises the importance of addressing challenging working conditions for creatives for culture to be able to deliver its economic, social and cultural objectives.** Here we outline that in order for the policy to fully support creative and cultural development, at the local, national or international level, it needs to adopt actions and strategies that are centred on its workers and their aspirations. These all need to contribute equally to sustainable worker-centred policy-making and should not be cherry-picked to focus on specific outputs.

In November 2021 we co-organised with Dr Federica Vigano' (Free University of Bolzano, Italy) a workshop entitled *Creative Work: Possible Futures after covid-19* (4th-5th November 2021). Many contributions to the workshop shone light further onto how the extant dynamics of creative work and employment had in many ways been doubled down on, but they also highlighted opportunities for new approaches and offered practical recommendations to tackle the challenges



faced. Learnings were presented from specific sectors (film and TV, visual arts, performing arts, music, games and more) and the experiences of specific groups within industries (freelancers, self-employed, working mothers), organisations and advocacy groups (representative organisations, associations, unions and co-operatives). Different international perspectives (UK, Italy, Germany, the USA and South Africa and pan-European) were also presented, with papers exploring the dynamics of cities and rural areas, including different policy frameworks, infrastructure, spatial dimensions and networks.



RESEARCH AND EMERGING KNOWLEDGE

In this piece, we summarise findings of a [recent report](#) (England et al., 2022) that captures the learning from the event. Two key themes emerged regarding the impact of the pandemic on creative work: collective approaches and care for creative workers.

Collective approaches:



- practices of solidarity and mutual aid
- new collaborations and (digital) innovations
- collective mobilisation and activism (online and physical)

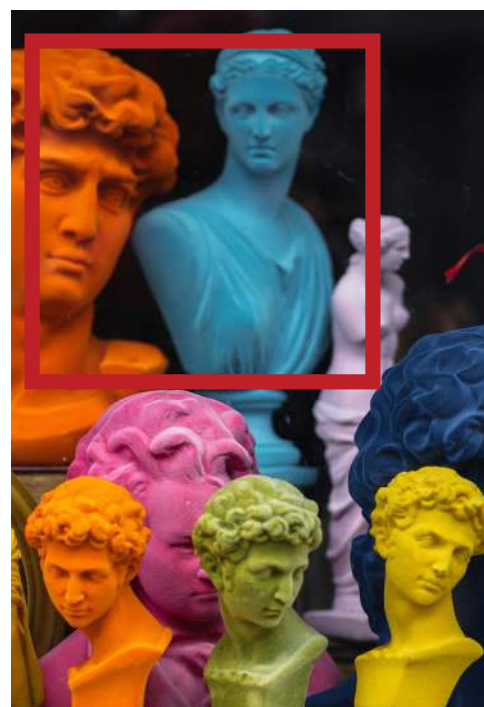
Care for creative workers:



- interventions that protect workers' rights and enable sustainable livelihoods
- interventions that eliminate barriers in relation to gender, ethnic diversity and other forms of exclusion.

In relation to collective approaches, the report discusses practices of solidarity and mutual aid, new collaborations and innovations, collective mobilisation and activism (online and physical) including the role of unions but also organisational forms such as cooperatives, cultural strategy groups and the work of cultural intermediaries. However, to be effective, collective responses also need to truly be for common gain, rather than groups of individuals working together for individual advancement and self-actualisation in a way that continues to promote neoliberal culture. The ongoing pandemic has created further conditions in which self-interest can thrive, and it will therefore be even more important to actively work against individualising tendencies in developing sustainable models for cultural and creative recovery. It is also necessary for collective action to be coordinated and resourced in order to make such modes of work effective and sustainable (Tanghetti et al., 2022).

There are also opportunities to recognise new digital innovations emerging across the creative and cultural industries in response to the pandemic. This includes innovative digital formats for content production and dissemination, artists developing alternative routes to market via social media and online retail and growth of online support networks. Some of these, we hope, are here to stay and should be celebrated. Still, others arguably reflect a forced diversification which may do more damage in the long run without adequate support for upskilling and market development (England, 2021).



In relation to **care for creative workers** it is essential to consider interventions that protect workers' rights and enable sustainable livelihoods, but also ones that eliminate barriers in relation to gender, ethnic diversity and other forms of exclusion. This includes the erosion of creative workers' rights when temporary contracts and unstable careers do not allow workers to be able to receive basic social security in case of unemployment or health issues. The pandemic highlighted the fragility of the sector (Comunian and England, 2020), the criticality and discontinuity of employment relationships and contracts, and the inadequacy of protection.

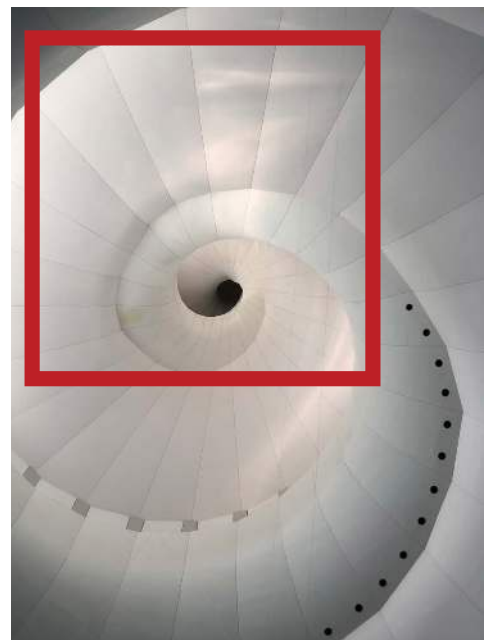
In relation to barriers, it is essential to unpack how the impact of the Covid pandemic does not affect creative workers equally. Some jobs are more protected than others, some places will recover faster than others, provide greater social security or broader access to financial support. But some individuals within those jobs also have more opportunities than others to be resilient. Research included in the report highlights the need to support parents, particularly mothers and younger creative workers, when barriers in accessing work and career progression and wage penalties are compounded, but also those working across geographical boundaries. New and existing support networks (online and offline) can offer spaces of solidarity that reduce isolation and offer mental health support. **However, it is essential that caring work – in addition to the work it supports – is adequately rewarded (economically and socially) and that its implementation and delivery does not continue to be disproportionately assigned to already disadvantaged and marginalised groups.** These findings put more pressure a need for radical rethinking – at local, national and international levels – of the work that needs to happen for practices of care to fully enter the everyday practices of employers and workers within our creative and cultural economies.

In order to be able to fully capture and understand the experiences and diverse needs of creative workers, value their contributions and address the structural and spatial challenges they face, more accurate data on industrial and occupational activities within the creative economy is needed. More attention also needs to be placed on how creative workers – as part of the broader gig economy – become commodities of our societies and are not given basic working rights that allow them to make a sustainable living, particularly in highly competitive cities. When re-futuring creative work and creative and cultural industries, local, regional and national differences – in policy, infrastructure, networks and economies as well as covid-19 infection rates, responses and pace of recovery – are important to take into consideration, but international experiences and practices can nevertheless provide valuable learning opportunities.



POLICY TRAJECTORIES

While broad umbrella policy initiatives such as the 'creative city', or 'recovery strategies' tend to remain quite superficial in their understanding of creative workers and their needs, the breadth of creative employment (including many sectors across the economy) and the range of values and objectives that drive creative work, awareness of the central role of culture and the challenges faced by creative and cultural workers has undoubtedly grown during the pandemic. This is starting to be reflected in policy. For example, the European Parliament's resolution for Cultural Recovery in Europe (2020) emphasises the strategic role of culture in economic terms, but also its key role in fostering processes of social change and cohesion and the impact of the pandemic on both of these areas. Importantly, the European framework recognises the importance of addressing challenging working conditions for creatives for culture to be able to deliver its economic, social and cultural objectives. In this final section we outline that in order for policy to fully support creative and cultural development, at the local, national or international level, it needs to adopt actions and strategies that are centred on its workers and their aspirations. These all need to contribute equally to sustainable worker-centred policy-making and should not be cherry-picked to focus on specific outputs.



Firstly, it is vital that ***creative work is understood, recognised and valued as work***. This involves adequately valuing and compensating the time, knowledge and skills of creative workers and supporting sustainable livelihoods by developing care-full policies and supporting infrastructure (economic, spatial and social). This means acknowledging the key position of creative workers (especially freelancers) in the supply chain for creative economies (Walmsley et al., 2022) and also in generating capacity among creative and cultural organisations and industries to contribute to the economy and society. In part, this requires a cognitive reframing of creative work, but it would also be facilitated by the development of more secure employment contracts and conditions, with provision for social security and fair remuneration (Culture Action Europe and Dâmaso, 2021).

Further development of inclusive industry and occupation categories and measurements of the contributions of creatives both within and outside of the creative economy are needed to avoid them falling through the gaps in the future.

International instruments (i.e. an EU framework) would be helpful here to establish minimum standards, address structural fragilities and inequities (*ibid*), alongside local action. Within the sector itself, it is also important for this reframing to take place, and for the examples of (often grassroots) mobilisation, activism, collaboration and mutual aid emerging from the pandemic, to be coordinated and resourced in order to make this work of collectively caring for creative workers both accessible and sustainable in the long term.

Connected with this, policy needs to **support the diversity of creative workers and their diverse value systems, including economic, social and cultural dimensions**. It is tempting for policy-makers to adopt a broader perspective of what creative work is, perhaps ignoring the non-economic driven component of creative work (a neoliberal approach) or focussing solely on the more socially-oriented contribution of creative work. However, the creative economy thrives on diversity – across sectors of the economy, diversity of cultures and career stages and objectives. Therefore, **the most valuable interventions would need to be open to the wide range of contributions made by creative workers – whether economic, social or cultural – and to the kind of value-systems that each worker is pursuing**. While creative economy actors are definitely aware of the importance that each of these components play in their supply-chains and value-systems, there is an ongoing struggle to articulate this as an interdependent and holistic ecosystem, with the tendency to continue to characterise success in economic terms.



This connects further with the need to allow **creative workers to have a voice in policymaking**, particularly at the local level. The diversity of perspectives that come from a broader understanding of creative work – from experienced professionals to emerging artists – allows for different needs and values to be considered in relation to local environments. (urban and rural) and their development. For example, Romeiro highlights that creative activism can have a meaningful role “in policy learning and urban place-making” but also that the same policies and context “can also have a decisive effect on the activation of creative activism practices” (2017: 27). In the long-term, this openness will add value to creative worker-centred policy-making. Alongside grassroots activism and mobilisation, it would also be important for representative organisations such as trade unions to recognise the specific category of these types of workers, who are typically equated with the general self-employed.

Worker-centred policy making needs to recognise and value the multiple relationships between creative workers and place (including mobilities).

Creative and cultural workers, as well as other professionals, will come to value and contribute to a city or region in different ways. This is often in connection with lifecycle needs and career opportunities. In this respect, large centres need to coordinate and cooperate with small centres or regional infrastructure to allow creative workers to develop according to their needs and objectives. The smaller centres might be essential to provide lower-cost or larger infrastructure or other opportunities that creative workers might not be able to exploit in urban centres. Similarly, commuting or other forms of temporary mobility might be beneficial to individuals, cities and regions alike to support creative workers at different stages of their careers and with different cultural and linguistic resources – without excluding them from the advantages that clustering and or co-location can offer.

Finally, for worker-centred policy-making to work, emphasis needs to be placed on the ***care and support offered to creative workers through policies that engage with sustainable and inclusive jobs and careers***. While in neoliberal economies, policy-making has shied away from interventions that regulate careers and jobs, it is crucial that policy indicates forms of best practice. Through interventions in markets – commissioning, supply-chain relations or administration of quasi-public institutions and similar – urban and regional policies can contribute to collectively defining what “good work” (Moran, 2010) can be for creative workers. This may involve workers engaging with local policy-makers to re-define their working conditions and more broadly to see the value of their work publicly recognised.

These conclusions have attempted to draw a roadmap for research and policy to recognise and care for creative workers (socially and legally) and engage with opportunities to support and reshape the future of cultural and creative industries. We nevertheless acknowledge that there are significant challenges ahead as the conditions of the pandemic extend and evolve. It is for both academics and policy-makers to address those challenges together, learning from international examples of good practice, making sure that research can add value to policy, and that policy can test and develop academic ideas for the benefit of the citizens, cities and regions at the heart of their work.



Key components of creative worker-centred policy-making (adapted from Comunian et al. 2021)

Overall, our research highlights the need and potential to support creative workers in their development and employment conditions, and to reconsider their relationship with cities, localities and their future mobilities. It also calls for greater social and legislative recognition for creative workers, a new worker-centred approach to creative policy making and the development of more collective and care-full strategies for creative employment and creative careers.

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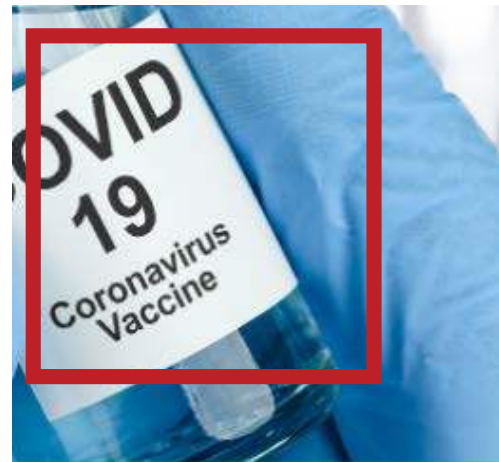
THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE CCSI: A LONG-LASTING THREAT OR A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION?

TASSOS MALLIOS AND GABRIELE ROSANA
CULTURE ACTION EUROPE

The covid-19 pandemic has had a disruptive impact on the cultural and creative sectors, accelerating pre-existing trends, including unprecedented income loss, growing precariousness, and inequalities in the European cultural ecosystem. Many cultural workers have started leaving the sector and numerous institutions are threatened to close. With them, accumulated knowledge and skills would be permanently lost, and the cultural ecosystem would be profoundly weakened, further undermining Europe's very cultural diversity. However, the vitality of European culture depends on the well-being, freedom of expression and creation, professional growth and development of the people professionally engaged in culture and the arts. Economic, social, and any other role of culture and the arts cannot be fulfilled if a primary condition is not ensured: a free and fair environment for artistic value to flourish, and for artists to pursue their ideas and aspirations. A solution to tackle this challenge includes strengthening the status of artists and cultural workers and, with it, the very sustainability of the sector. This priority should be on top of the EU's political agenda for the next half of the mandate, taking stock of the work that the Open Method of Coordination is conducting on this topic. Featuring it with ambition in the next Work Plan for Culture 2023/2026 would also allow a structured benchmarking of existing initiatives by Member States, as well as a better framing of what the key features of a European Status of the Artists should be.



Arts and culture have not been the same since the beginning of the pandemic. With revenues dropping on an average 31% and up to 90% in some sub-sectors, as highlighted in the first comprehensive study that measured the impact of the pandemic on the CCS¹, covid-19 has tested the capacities of national cultural policies of governments to assess, adapt and act in an unprecedented situation. It also revealed persistent issues in the existing public funding models, the lack of relevant data about the size and the contribution of the cultural and creative sectors, which in some cases delayed the emergency measures, or led to inadequate measures.



In the majority of EU Member States, cultural and creative sectors initiated surveys and analyses to assess on average the impact of the pandemic on the sectors from social, psychological and economic points of views. Since the beginning, it had already been predicted that it would have had massive and potentially long-lasting consequences. **The pandemic has led to an economy-wide shock that was not equally distributed – the arts, and live entertainment sectors being amongst the most affected therein.**² This could "result not only in increased precariousness [...] but also in professional brain drain. Cultural workers, in particular, who cannot make a living anymore with their cultural/creative job are more likely to leave the sectors and look for non-cultural jobs".³ Many workers (authors, performers, technicians, administrative staff) are already seeking jobs outside the sectors, and many organisations are in fragile positions. Additional support is needed "to maintain the level of skills and entrepreneurship required throughout CCSI value chains" and, with them, the European cultural and creative ecosystem.⁴

Hence, with different trends across the Union in terms of support for the CCSI, this has created increasing political pressure at the European level to improve the working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors, which were precarious and unstable already before the pandemic. This is a precondition to achieve the sustainability of the cultural and creative sectors. The topic of the cultural recovery of Europe through an improvement of the labour situation of artists and cultural workers has been on top of the agenda of the European Parliament, that has become increasingly more vocal on the topic, with both the Commission and the Council aligned, in their respective competence remit, to advance such a priority. This has also created a unique opportunity to feature a comprehensive discourse on working conditions for artists and cultural workers at EU level.

¹ IDEA Consult, Goethe-Institut, Amann S. and Heinsius J. (2021), *Research for CULT Committee – Cultural and creative sectors in post-covid-19 Europe: crisis effects and policy recommendations*

² IDEA Consult, Goethe-Institut, Amann S. and Heinsius J. (2021), *Ibid.*, p.25.

³ IDEA Consult, Goethe-Institut, Amann S. and Heinsius J. (2021), *Ibid.*, p.38.

⁴ Ernst & Young (2021), *Rebuilding Europe: The cultural and creative economy before and after the covid-19 crisis*, p. 21.

The Situation of Artists and Cultural Workers and the post-COVID Cultural Recovery in the European Union

With covid-19 exacerbating already worrying and precarious trends in the culture labour scene, this contribution will briefly examine the following aspects: artists' status, working conditions, mobility, income and fair remuneration, and human rights.

Artists' Status

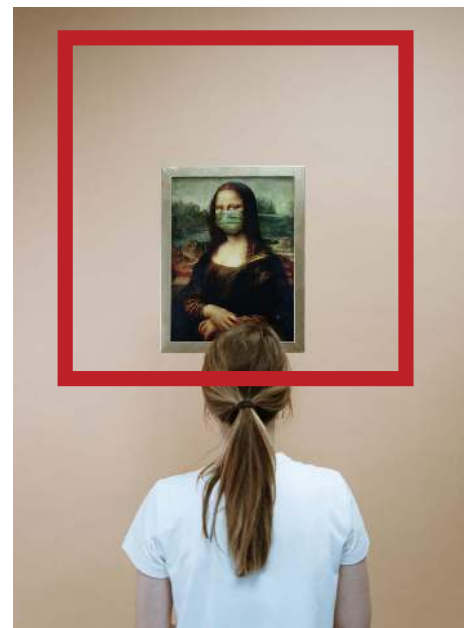
First of all, **the coexistence of multiple definitions of 'artist' hinders a unified recognition of their labour status.** Although there is an increasing acknowledgement of specific labour characteristics of the artists, none of the existing texts addresses them holistically. The status of the artist faces many specific challenges in the labour market. covid-19 foregrounded the impact of these complexities on the status of the artist. During the pandemic, many artists working in the EU found it difficult to prove their working status and hence their eligibility for unemployment and other benefits.⁵

Working Conditions

The multiple nature of artists' income sources (regular employment, self-employment, copyright, grants and subsidies, loans), combined with a fractured labour market, often leads to low income levels and precariousness. Compared with the wider labour market, artists and cultural workers are more often self-employed (33%) than other workers are (14%).⁶

Due to their very specific characteristics, such forms of employment⁷ raise several issues, such as the following: access to support measures is a challenge, as programmes are ill-adapted to these hybrid forms of employment and it is common for self-employed cultural workers to lack access to safety nets, which reduces their resilience. In addition, official statistics in their current form do not capture the second jobs or voluntary work which are also very present in the cultural and creative sectors, thus not showing the real size of cultural employment and the importance of the CCS.⁸

Artists and cultural workers are more likely to work part-time, not to have an open-ended contract, to combine employment and self-employment in several countries throughout their careers, and in other sectors (services, education, etc). Therefore, they often have atypical work patterns differing from the traditional model of full-time, open-ended contracts with one employer. A further aspect is the passionate dedication of many to their craft, as well as high levels of market competition in the sector, which may mean that creative workers will accept work for low or even no pay, hoping that it may lead to other opportunities. Moreover, the ability of artists to benefit from unemployment benefit regimes or other support differs significantly between Member States. These challenges are



⁵ Panteia (2020), *The status and working conditions of artists and cultural and creative professionals*, p. 51.

⁶ Panteia (2020), *Ibid*, p. 18.

⁷ OECD (2020), *Supporting livelihoods during the covid-19 crisis: Closing the gaps in safety nets*.

⁸ OECD (2020), *Culture shock: covid-19 and the cultural and creative sectors*

intensified by the fact that self-employed artists have to cover their own taxes and social security contributions or pay into guaranteed income schemes. Moreover, universal public benefit schemes often require significant and regular contributions. Additionally, different national social security systems remain uncoordinated, which creates added difficulties in the case of cross-border mobility.⁹

Mobility

The high mobility of cultural workers and artists is accompanied by a lack of unified regulations or policy coordination regarding taxes, social security, minimum wage, recognition of diplomas, and related access to funding and up-to-date information on these issues. The characteristics of mobility patterns vary widely. They can be short-term or, in what is increasingly frequent, longer-term.¹⁰

Obstacles to mobility usually derive from the fact that rules, regulations and administrative requirements differ between countries, thus impacting social security. Despite the unity of legislation principle', which aims to provide for the elimination of double payment of social security contributions¹¹, and the principle that "entitlement to social security benefits is linked to the obligation to pay contributions to the social security system related to the occupation an artist is holding"¹², the coexistence of different systems and rules leads to administrative difficulties. To address them, the EU established five principles: equality of treatment; equality of benefits, income, facts or events; aggregation of periods; single applicable legislation; exportability.¹³ The recognition of artistic diplomas and qualifications remains a challenge – as does the lack of EU- wide approaches to arts education and training.

Income and fair remuneration

Artists earn their income in many ways; both regular employment and, in many cases, income from self-employment. Additionally, **the source of income for artists is often dependent on the sector or occupation within a sector and fluctuates greatly.** Moreover, some artists are often willing to engage in unpaid work, which is used by some employers not to provide employees with fair remuneration.¹⁴ As a result and despite the diversification of employment patterns of artists and cultural workers (described earlier), accompanied by non-standard working practices and multiple sources of income, the majority of artists have low income levels.¹⁵

The high levels of freelancing and self-employment in the sector, including in professions where employment contracts were formerly common, has



⁹ See European Union (2004), Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems and IGBK (2010), Experts' Workshop on Social Security of Visual Artists in Europe.

¹⁰ Panteia (2020), op.cit., 24.

¹¹ Panteia (2020), Ibid, p. 63.

¹² Panteia (2020), Ibid, p. 63.

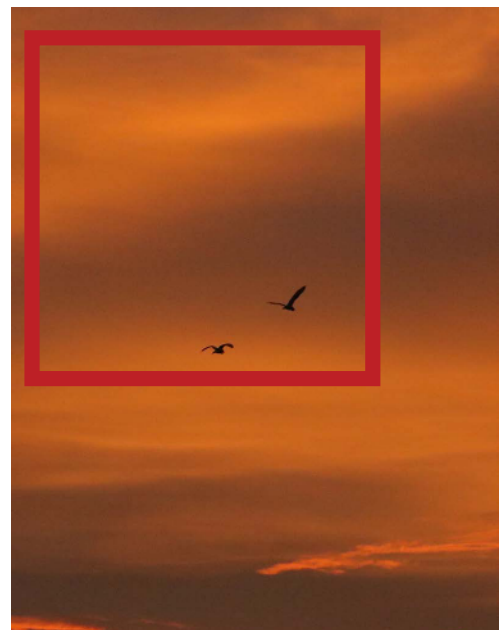
¹³ See European Union (2004), Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems.

¹⁴ Panteia (2020), op.cit., pp. 92-93.

¹⁵ FERA & FSE (2018), *If the culture industries are so successful, why are so many artists poor?*

resulted in the emergence of a new obstacle to collective bargaining, due to the application of competition rules to collective agreements for self-employed workers. This has implications for rates of pay.¹⁶

The application of competition rules, designating such self-employed workers as undertakings, means that they are not eligible to be represented by their trade unions in collective bargaining, as this would constitute price-fixing. In many instances, the competition authority further warned unions not to recommend any minimum rates to members. Thus, individuals engaged on a self-employed contract could be engaged at rates below those that unions and employers had previously jointly established as a fair minimum, also undermining the rates themselves. However, a positive development in this sense is happening at the EU level, with the Commission committing to present before the end of the year revised draft guidelines on the application of EU Competition Law to collective agreements regarding the working conditions of solo self-employed people providing services.¹⁷



¹⁶ See ETUC (2019), *New Trade Union Strategies for New Forms of Employment*.

¹⁷ See European Commission Press Corner (2021), *Commission proposals to improve the working conditions of people working through digital labour platforms*.

Access to funding remains also a challenging issue. Traditionally a key source of income for individual artists, direct subsidies in the form of grants paradoxically may also incentivise low-pay by encouraging ambitious outcomes without ensuring decent pay. The self-employed and small enterprises in the cultural sector, as well as artists and other cultural and creative workers, also often describe the difficulty of accessing loans from banks¹⁸, with microfinance representing the most promising avenue to explore.

Artistic Freedom

Covid-19 has contributed to a climate of securitisation, which may result in additional restrictions to freedom of artistic expression.

The socio-economic system in which artists work can limit free expression. Artists are "caught up in various "survival solutions", especially precarious artists and can become dependent on funding, platforms and broadcasters and institutions that artists might find difficult to criticise for the risk of exclusion.¹⁹ Covid-19's negative impact on the finances of artists increases this risk.



Initiatives and Best Practices

Intensifying the already fragile position of artists and cultural workers, the pandemic further reinforced the need for direct action to address their precariousness. As a response to the pandemic, governments adopted several horizontal emergency measures dedicated to immediate response of the economic and social urgencies of the cultural and creative workers and of their small and micro-organisations' (profit-making or non-profit based enterprises) – many are not specifically targeting cultural and creative sectors.

Regional and local governments (federal regions, cities, municipalities), on the other hand, provided substantial support directly to the individuals and organisations operating on their territories. The types of support vary from direct compensation for wages, allow using the full awarded subsidies for projects, launching dedicated one-off schemes, tax and rent exemptions, as well as other solidarity measures, e.g. legal, financial or other advice and guidance for individuals and organisations, information resources and platforms etc.

On the EU level, support for short-time work schemes has been introduced, such as the SURE mechanism, and a dedicated instrument called REACT-EU as a part of the Next Generation EU envelope to support workers in regions and sectors most affected by the pandemic – including the cultural sector. There is a lack of data so far, however, on the extent to which SURE has contributed to working arrangements in the cultural and creative sectors.

The State Aid Temporary Framework adopted in March 2020 to enable Member States to use the full flexibility foreseen under State aid rules to support the economy in the context of the pandemic has also given means of support for the CCS. As of December 2021, 28 schemes were approved specifically supporting the cultural sector, while additional 37 schemes address a narrow list of sectors, including the cultural and creative ones.²⁰

¹⁸ Panteia (2020), *op. cit.*, p. 96.

¹⁹ Panteia (2020), *Ibid.*, p. 115.

²⁰ European Commission (2022), *The State Aid Temporary Framework*

Furthermore, the core component of the NGEU envelope, called Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) is channeled to EU Member States between 2021 and 2026 to better cope with the pandemic fallout and make European economies and societies more sustainable, resilient and better equipped for the green and digital transitions.

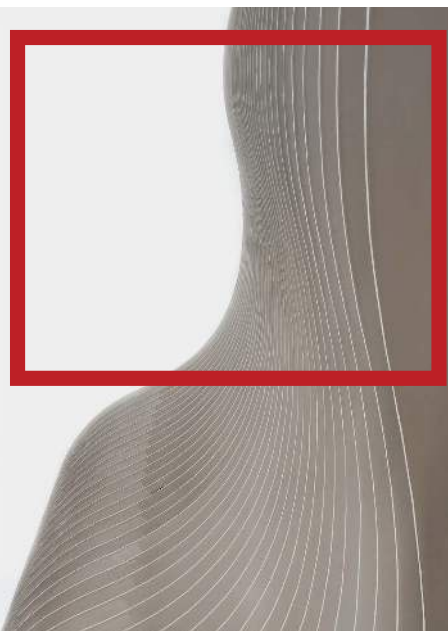
The European cultural and creative sectors, backed by the European Parliament, called to specifically earmark at the very least 2% of each National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) for culture.

Around 50% of the EU countries have explicitly included culture in their NRRPs,²¹ meaning that while the 2% figure has been met at an aggregated EU level thanks to a handful of good performances, the majority of Member States either do not foresee any specific line for culture or do lag behind such value, standing at around 1%.

In addition, we see that sometimes not strictly cultural interventions are included in such a tiny envelope, for example supporting tourism and energy efficiency of (cultural) buildings.

The predominant paradigm supports cultural and creative industries, including audiovisual, and often prioritises big institutional players, leaving aside the cultural independent scene and micro and small organisations, not effectively contributing to addressing the (post-COVID) working conditions in the CCSI

One result has been clear, that in the uncertainty about the future, there is a need for new transition measures for the cultural and creative sectors in place – to tackle the existing challenges and build new, more sustainable realities.



Conclusions: Towards Better Working Conditions for Artists

In light of both the impact of the covid-19 pandemic, on the one hand, and the already existing fragile and precarious conditions in the cultural and creative sectors, on the other, it is high time the EU adopts a holistic approach on the labour arrangements of artists and cultural workers, which would embrace the CCSI as a whole.

There is a need for the EU and the Member States to address the multiple problems related to the working conditions in CCSI as an interrelated complex of issues, look into their root causes, while also developing policies and advancing on each of them separately, at different paces, depending on the nature of the problem.

The atypical nature of the artistic and cultural work cannot be fully addressed without taking into account broader structural vulnerabilities and challenges faced by the European cultural and creative ecosystem. This is why the development of a European Framework for working conditions in the cultural and creative

²¹ Culture Action Europe (2021), *Culture In The EU's National Recovery and Resilience Plans: The state of play one year after the launch of the campaign to earmark 2% in the post-pandemic strategies*

sectors and industries, as called for by the European Parliament²², leading up to the adoption of a European Status of the Artists²³, could provide a multidimensional and coherent policy instrument to support artists and cultural workers and contribute to the sustainability of cultural and creative sectors and industries during and after the covid-19 pandemic.

Building on the most recent developments, this priority should be on top of the EU's political agenda for the next half of the mandate of the European Commission, taking stock of the work and the exchanges happening in the Open Method of Coordination set-up by the Council, until the end of 2022, as part of the current Work Plan for Culture, the main roadmap for coordination in cultural policy available to the Member States at the EU level.

At the same time, featuring working conditions with ambition in the next Work Plan for Culture 2023/2026 would also allow a structured benchmarking of relevant indicators to appreciate the state of play of working conditions in the various Member States. At the same time, it would help mapping, with the indispensable support of the national governments, existing initiatives put forward by Member States, such as, for example, the Fairness Process in Arts and Culture happening in Austria, with a clear focus on fair pay in the cultural and creative sectors, in order to better frame the common understanding of what a European Status of the Artists should entail.



²² European Parliament resolution on the cultural recovery of Europe (2020/2708(RSP))

²³ European Parliament resolution of 20 October 2021 on the situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU (2020/2261(INI))

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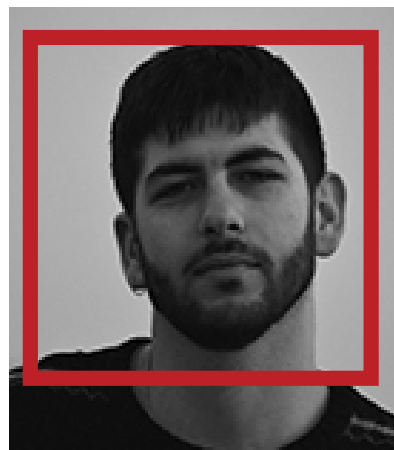
European Parliament resolution on the cultural recovery of Europe ([2020/2708\(RSP\)](#))

European Parliament resolution of 20 October 2021 on the situation of artists and the cultural recovery in the EU ([2020/2261\(INI\)](#))



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ON THE POLICY POTENTIAL OF INTERMEDIARY CULTURAL SPACES AROUND COVID-19 TIMES

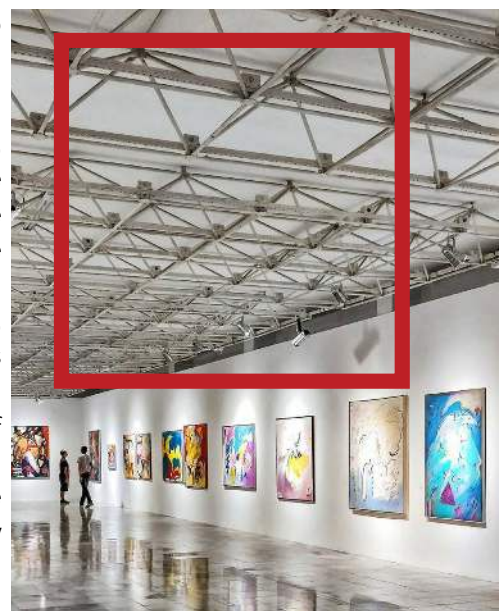
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The following text is based on an ongoing study on intermediary cultural spaces in France studied in perspective with other European countries. The study started in March 2020 in the framework of the [Creamed research group](#), therefore the covid-19 parameter came into the research framework from the very beginning and has evolved into a post-doctoral contract (ANR-15-IDEX-01) on researching into the transformations of such places in France, Spain and Greece. Here, focusing on the evolution of intermediary cultural spaces in France during the last years until the health crisis, we present policy- related developments that show that their emergence and consolidation can be seen as an answer to the lack of efficient cultural policies and in the same time, their institutionalisation process- that to a large extent coincided with the covid-19 pandemic- provided a policy framework for their development which has not been an approach observed in the other countries studied. We also introduce a European perspective on intermediary cultural spaces that calls for tailored support.

An answer to the lack of efficient cultural policies?

In France, already back in 2001, the *Friches, laboratoires, fabriques, squats, projets pluridisciplinaires...: une nouvelle époque de l'action culturelle* report, written by Fabrice Lextrait, highlighted the ongoing transformation of the cultural and artistic sphere in the country. The report, that had for the first time approached those spaces from a cultural policy perspective, underlined the emergence of **experimental cultural spaces** in different urban and non-urban environments, that questioned- in an original way- the conditions of production, mediation and reception of artistic practices. There have been different terms used to describe those spaces: « intermediary spaces », « alternative », « emerging », « friches culturelles » or « artistic squats » have been some of the terms deployed. Maunaye (2004: 13) underlined that perhaps the common denominator of these forms of artistic and cultural action, that cannot be labeled under the same term, is that they all share a common foundation: **they are the result of an answer to the lack of efficient cultural policies.**



With their work, they included the excluded parts of the society, provided alternative artistic contents, offered spaces for experimentation and transdisciplinary encounters. The hybridisation of artistic and cultural activities favoring the coexistence of established and emerging practices, the openness to diverse audiences, the principles of cultural participation and co-creation, the questioning of an elitist approach to the relationship to culture and knowledge, as well as and their strong territorial anchorage, turned them throughout the years to a subject for policy development.

Tiers-lieux : a sujet for cultural policies?

Twenty years after the so-called Lextrait report, many of those intermediary spaces might have disappeared, some still exist and function in the same format while others have emerged and have occupied a new role in the public realm.

Today, the term **tiers lieux**, an immediate translation of the term third place coined by Oldenburg in 1989, has been widely used in the French context to describe places that question what is possible, provide opportunities to meet, to exchange, to co-create, to experiment and to re-visit the relationship between art and society.

One could say that those spaces are gradually evolving into a movement whose values are grounded on sharing: on doing together («faire ensemble») for better living together («vivre ensemble») (Levy Waitz, 2018). In the Tiers Lieux report (2021) we read that in the current landscape of third spaces, 70% of those mapped offer cultural activities. In 2018 the journal of the Observatory of Cultural Policies in Grenoble dedicated a special issue to them under the title *Tiers-Lieux, a modèle à suivre?* in which they questioned whether these third places propose an exit model from the crisis- at that time the economic crisis- highlighting the fact that many local governments in France support the emergence of such third places in their territory, while the civil society takes a dynamic role in their activation. Driven by the continuous interest on the policy level around those spaces the Observatory also dedicated a synthetic note to the subject at the end of 2021. One of the important elements that the note is putting forward is that **beyond offering a physical space, these cultural places mobilise different communities**. Based on their ability to activate different "proximities" (Dechamp & Pelissier, 2019), they manage to implement collaborations between heterogeneous actors, cultivate the desire to build common project and to co-develop spaces of meaning, based on shared values. Another important element highlighted in this reflection document is that **these places mobilise different economic sectors, each one of them to a different extent: the public sector, the private sector as well as the collaborative economy sector**.



Of course similar spaces exist in other countries and cities worldwide. The difference is that in France they have been picked up from institutions as **drivers of social and territorial cohesion**, entering in a phase of institutionalisation and recognition by public authorities- that is often criticised by practitioners. The National Agency for Territorial Cohesion launched in 2019 a programme under the title «*Nouveaux lieux, nouveau liens*» (could be translated as «*New spaces, New relationships*»). Support was offered to different structures for the conception and implementation projects, the re-use and operation costs for different spaces (old justice houses, brownfields, offices...), etc. A dedicated call for «*Fabriques du territoire*» (that could be translated as «*Territorial Factories*») was launched to consolidate third places that were already rooted in their neighborhoods. The project devoted 45 million euros to 300 projects selected until 2022. Half of them have to be rooted into priority neighborhoods defined by city policies and the other half in rural contexts. A specific label «*Fabrique Numérique du territoire*» was also created for those spaces and structures that have as principal activity the access to culture, cultural rights and digital public services, education and training, citizen participation, and entrepreneurship. The next phase of this institutionalisation process was the creation of [France Tiers-lieu](#), an association aiming to support the development, emergence and promotion of the third places sector in France through training, impact evaluation, creation of common tools and support for the emergence of regional networks.



Crisis

All the above developments occurred in the middle of the covid-19 crisis, which followed the so-called financial crisis in Europe that hit – in a way or another- all countries and sectors. In the framework of a wider research project on the cultural third in the Region of Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur in the South of France (PACA hereafter), **we have used the opportunity that occurred during the health crisis that outburst at the beginning of our research, to initiate a specific inquiry into how those places adapted in this specific context.** The research was carried out by an interdisciplinary group of researchers from the Universities of Côte d'Azur, Avignon, Toulon and Marseille that are part of the Creamed research network. We collectively identified a number of different and complementary lines of research that were used as a guide for the analysis. Our corpus included cultural third places in this specific region: Le Port des Créateurs in Toulon, La Fabulerie and La Friche Belle de Mai in Marseille and the Hublot in Nice, as well as spaces from Greece, Spain, Luxembourg, and Romania. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were organised with those managing the spaces and took place between May and July 2020.



Based on this collective research, various observations can be made, but here we focus on the following:

1

Many of those places have showed their ability to be *of service* to the society by proposing solutions to the imposed isolation and physical and social distancing (Magkou & Pélissier, 2021). At the beginning of the health crisis in March 2020, third places gained quite some visibility thanks to the role they played as social actors by distributing food for those in need, producing protection equipment and material for the health workers (masks, respiratory systems, distributors of hydro alcoholic gel) or supporting those that are digitally illiterate and helping other communities through educational means.



2

In Magkou & Lambert (2021) we describe how such places adopted practices of what we call "solidarity communication" exploring different possibilities for associating an optimistic message the current crisis, setting up ethical actions and being able to talk about them, not in a promotional or public relations approach in the traditional sense, but rather in an effort to re-connect with audiences and emphasising human relations, in an inclusive way. They often went beyond their explicit role by filling gaps where policy responses could not reach.



3

The covid-19 pandemic, presented a major challenge for those working in cultural third places: how to transition through a digital transformation process that allows interaction with audiences in a world that is becoming more and more virtual and dematerialised (Magkou et al, 2021). Although the digital was already incorporated in their ways of being, doing, acting, during the health crisis, they had to re-imagine themselves and explore different digital tools for keeping up with the challenge. Even today, two years after the outburst of the covid-19 pandemic, these spaces are still called to deliver under the binary of physical versus digital space and explore different options in their programming and function, without necessarily having all the knowledge, skills or resources.



4

The crisis however hit hard on them as well: **many of them have reported they felt more fragile, especially financially, even if they were able to receive financial support from the central and local government.** They were forced to lose a source of income that was based on a large extent on parallel activities offered to audiences (concerts, bar, renting of co-working spaces among other).



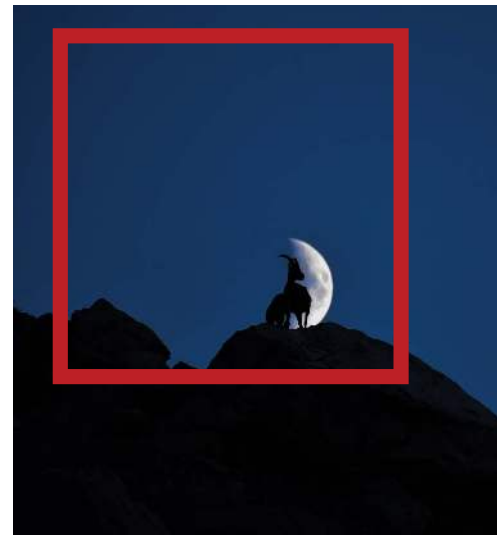
5

The more established cultural third places, however, confronted less financial difficulties compared to the emerging ones, given that they had enough savings to allow their survival for the number of months that they were closed. To some extent, these losses were partially compensated by receiving governmental support in the form of partial unemployment schemes for their staff or by reporting the payment of the taxes on wages (Magkou & Pélissier, 2021). The representatives of cultural spaces beyond France that were interviewed reported similar support measures, however mentioned that public support was not so visible, nor long-lasting.



From a European perspective

The need for supporting frameworks for cultural places all over Europe throughout covid-19 has been brought forward on the European level by various European Cultural networks. Trans Europe Halles produced a video in the framework of the Creative Europe project Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities (2018-2021) under the title "[A World Without Cultural Centres?](#)" tackling the impact of the pandemic on them and the vital role they play in society. But another interesting initiative they took was a "[Shared recovery programme](#)" to support their members through peer-to-peer solutions and expert support to get back on track. **Where policies don't reach, such initiatives show the potential of a network to provide support to each member.** As they also note in the description of the project, it is clear that all cultural centers needed help, regardless the official support received or their experience. Just as a reminder, Trans Europe Halles is one of the oldest cultural networks in Europe repurposing abandoned buildings for arts, culture and activism since 1983. The European Cultural Centers network as well has underlined the need for specific and sustainable measures tailored to cultural spaces realities and beyond short-term visions. They called for specific recovery support for cultural centres, "[taking into account their role in community life and their capacity to host smaller groups and activities which may be uniquely situated to the crisis](#)".



Conclusion

With the French setting in mind, Idelon (2022) speaks of a "*moment tiers lieux*" characterised by a generalised enthusiasm for what sometimes promises to be a model for ending the crisis and which calls for collective questioning of this passage "*from off to in*". The setting in France is of course not the solution, nor necessarily a way forward. It reveals, however an intention from the side of public policy to address these spaces and provide structural – and not only project-based- support to their development.

Could this be a solution for wider policies that go beyond a project-based approach and provide the necessary infrastructure, advice and tools for those initiating or working in such places to advance with their work? The short-term recovery measures from covid-19, project based support, ongoing changes in health regulations and the uncertainty of the future do not draw a consolidated framework for action. They rather maintain a system that is not necessarily functioning.

Nevertheless, even if public authorities perceive such places as key actors in cohesion and territorial development (as it is the case in France), it should be underlined that their uniqueness lies on the fact that they emerge from a bottom-up collective logic, compared to existing local cultural institutions. They therefore require particular attention when approached from a cultural policy perspective, since they are questioning the traditional binary opposites that have, according to Besson (2021) historically structured cultural policies, such as for example culture versus economy, individual versus collective culture, artist versus spectators, alternative versus institutional or public versus private.



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FOCUS: SINGAPORE



“EMERGING STRONGER”: CULTURAL POLICY HIGHLIGHTS OF SINGAPORE’S COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

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Singapore, a small island nation-state, has a population with a high level of trust in government. According to the 2021 Trust Barometer by international consultancy Edelman (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2021), Singapore's high trust index score of 68 put it fifth among the 28 countries surveyed. The report showed that 76 per cent of Singaporean respondents had trust in the government. This aligned with another study in the same year by Singapore think-tank the Institute of Policy Studies, where 70% of respondents reported a high level of confidence in the government (Grace Ho, 2021). These findings explain why Singapore has weathered the covid-19 pandemic with a relatively low death rate as of late April 2022, according to the Ministry of Health, of 1,334 people out of a total of 1,193,250 cases (nearly 20% of the population) (Ministry of Health, 2022).



Having experienced the SARS epidemic in 2003 and with a high level of trust in government, Singaporeans were arguably more prepared to acquiesce to disease control guidelines such as limitations on public gatherings of people, restaurant dining restrictions and mask mandates. Under the law, those who breached the mask mandate could be fined or even jailed. Another control measure, the requirement for the population to use a digital token or the 'Trace Together' app on their mobile phone to record their entry to all public places including offices, malls, restaurants and shops, raised privacy concerns but these were addressed by the government publicly and the vast majority of the population complied.

As of 25 April 2022, Singapore has lifted most Covid restrictions (Ministry of Health, 2022). With a high vaccination rate – over 90% of the population has been fully vaccinated – there are no longer restrictions on group sizes for social gatherings, masks are only required indoors and there is no longer a requirement to use the phone app to record entry into public places.

More importantly for the arts sector, the capacity limit for events has been lifted although attendees at events of more than 500 people must be fully vaccinated. Performers, singers and musicians can now be unmasked.

This stands in contrast to the past two years. Theatres were closed in March 2020 but gradually re-opened from the middle of 2020 with restricted seating, masked and tested or vaccinated audiences, and strict guidelines on the movement and interaction of crew and performers.

The tagline “Emerging stronger” has been used in government documents and rhetoric to prepare Singapore for a post-pandemic world. An “Emerging Stronger” taskforce was formed in May 2020 under the government’s Future Economy Council and chaired jointly by a Minister and a top corporate leader, **bringing public and private sectors together to brainstorm ways to transform** Singapore economically. Naturally, leveraging digital technology to innovate new business models and tap global opportunities was a key recommendation. In typical Singapore fashion where government leads the way, the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth created an “[Emerging Stronger Conversations](#)” platform where the public was invited to share their opinions on Singapore’s future in public fora and outreach sessions and even contribute their Covid resilience stories on a special website.

As part of this initiative, in December 2020 **the Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Edwin Tong hosted a dialogue with the arts community, cultural institutions and representatives from the digital technology sector.** The dialogue acknowledged the struggles of the arts sector and asked three key questions (National Arts Council, 2021):



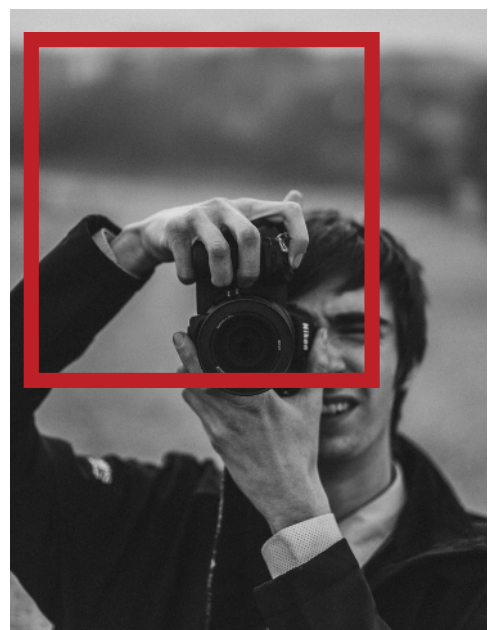
What will the arts and cultural sector look like beyond short-term Covid financial support from the government?

How can talent be sustained and retained?

How can the arts and cultural sector “pivot” towards new modes of content delivery and presentation, even beyond Singapore’s shores?

This was one of many dialogues that the National Arts Council (NAC) held with the arts community between 2020 and 2022. While Singapore has a top-down model of cultural governance, there was a noticeable number of engagement sessions with the arts community, including several sessions with freelancers and Self-Employed Persons arranged by the NAC’s Arts Resource Hub, a project set up in 2018 to support this community.

In Singapore therefore, there has been a strong emphasis on a unified response to meet the challenges of the future with the government leading the way. The following sections will report on the policy developments and schemes during the pandemic and the current priorities in planning for a post-pandemic future, while noting some of the challenges that still need to be addressed.



Government Support through the National Arts Council

Policy implementation for the arts is led by the NAC, a statutory agency under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth.

In March-April 2020, the NAC conducted a survey of 2,000 arts practitioners to understand how they had been affected by Covid.

91%

of respondents
had had projects
cancelled

54%

had lost more than
half their income from
the arts in the first
quarter of the year

75%

did not receive
compensation
for cancelled or
postponed projects

The devastation was clear and was borne out by ground-up surveys conducted by independent creative practitioners. One survey conducted through a Facebook group set up for creative and arts professionals during the pandemic found that over 60% of more than 300 respondents had experienced cancellations or postponements. Among the freelancers, 44% had taken on non-creative jobs to pay the bills (Nicholas Chee, 2020).

The morale of the arts sector was further affected in June 2020 when the Sunday edition of the national newspaper reported on a survey which showed that Singaporeans ranked "artist" at the top of a list of "non-essential workers" (Janice Tai, 2020). However, the government thankfully did not share the raw sentiment of a public hurting from the fresh impacts of Covid, as **the arts and arts workers were included in government Covid support packages from the very beginning**. At the end of March 2020, the government announced the first of three special budgets and in April 2020, the National Arts Council rolled out the first set of support schemes for the arts. These included a new project grant - the Digital Presentation Grant where artists and arts groups could receive up to \$20,000 to produce digital or online work. The NAC also facilitated the showing of digital works through its #SGCultureAnywhere initiative, with digital works platformed on its own arts event website called "A-List".

In addition, there were training subsidies of up to 90% of course fees for arts practitioners and an absentee payroll scheme to allow arts employees and freelancers to attend training. Arts companies were also eligible for the government's national Jobs Support programme aimed at helping businesses retain workers.

As the government rolled out another two special budgets in 2020, so the NAC also introduced additional financial support. The Arts and Culture Resilience Package Operating Grant (ACRP Operating Grant) disbursed support to eligible arts organizations to help with operating costs. Disbursed in two tranches, an organization could receive close to \$100,000 within a year. According to the NAC, over 240



organisations were supported in this way and over a period of two years, the NAC provided a total of \$75 million under these special measures (National Arts Council, 2022).

With the Digital Presentation Grant and the gradual re-opening of venues, safe management measures and guidelines for arts facilities were introduced by the NAC and partner institutions such as The Arts House, which operated a number of state-subsidized premises on behalf of the NAC. The venues also offered discounted rates to artists and arts groups. Such measures enabled arts groups, including freelancers, to continue working, albeit at limited capacity.

Thus, government support in the arts sector during Covid, as in other sectors, were aimed at the survival of organisations and companies, and protecting jobs. The Major Companies which receive regular funding from the NAC survived the pandemic. In line with the government's calls to under- or unemployed workers to upskill and be lifelong learners to cope with economic disruptions, the NAC also emphasized the training support schemes to under-employed freelancers.



Over time, as venues and galleries re-opened, major cultural institutions such as the National Gallery and the Esplanade continued commissioning works by artists, while the state-funded Singapore International of Arts (SIFA) which had been cancelled in 2020, resumed in 2021.

Amidst global travel restrictions, international events like SIFA and the annual Singapore Art Week (another major event run by the NAC) were naturally affected. The 2022 edition of the Singapore Art Week however, despite less international representation, drew many Singapore audiences – I experienced queues at a few of the exhibitions. Many innovative exhibitions among the 130 events of Art Week featured homegrown artists supported with grants from the NAC. The public reception and media interest made Art Week a welcome boost to the morale of Singaporeans as the country moved towards a state of living with covid-19 as "endemic" (Yik Ying Teo, 2021).

Towards a Post-Pandemic World and a New Arts Plan

Having navigated Covid, the NAC has its sights on strategies for the long-term sustainability of the arts and cultural sector. In line with the "Emerging Stronger" task force's recommendation about innovation and digital transformation, the NAC accelerated the push towards the adoption of digital technology in the arts. This was not a new idea. The existing national arts plan – Our SG Arts Plan 2018 – 2022 – already stated the idea of **encouraging the arts sector to use digital technology for art-making as well as marketing and audience development.** The pandemic simply gave a boost to this segment of the national strategy – a strategy that aimed at growing the local and international appetite and market for Singapore arts and connecting the increasingly diverse and globalised communities in Singapore.

The pandemic has clearly stimulated arts practitioners to consider new ways to make and present art, such as virtual long-distance collaborations and digital or hybrid forms of performance.

Some have embraced new possibilities and successfully experimented with new modes of storytelling and expression. Checkpoint Theatre, one of the NAC's Major Companies, produced an 8-part podcast of a solo work written and performed by a young playwright as well as a digital concert of new renditions of songs and music from their plays. Another Major Company, The Necessary Stage, produced video monologues by their Theatre for Seniors reflecting on their Covid experiences. The annual independently-produced storytelling festival, Storyfest, has been fully digital for two years.

A further step towards prompting more digital innovation was taken in 2021 when NAC launched the Art x Tech Lab, aimed at fostering collaboration between artists, creatives and technologists. Its partner was the NUS-Keio CUTE Center which was set up by the National University of Singapore and Japan's Keio University to conduct research in Interactive Design Media. Through an open call, 10 participants from the arts and creative communities were selected for an 8-month programme. They had to develop a prototype, proof of concept or a "minimum viable product" (National Arts Council, 2021).

While digital technology could open new opportunities particularly for engaging audiences, arts practitioners had expressed to the NAC several concerns from their experience with technology during the pandemic:



- unevenness in how artists had taken to technology and questions of access to needed technology as well as the kinds of skills needed to use it;
- there was a risk of "digital fatigue" as audiences at home had an abundance of digital works they could view;
- there was also competition from international digital works.

These were among the views shared by arts practitioners and companies at a dialogue session with the NAC and the Minister in August 2021 (National Arts Council, 2021).

Sustainability depends on resilient arts groups and companies, so in 2021 the NAC introduced an Organisation Transformation Grant – **a business transformation grant which arts companies and artists could use to collaboratively work on challenges facing their practice and companies, and find solutions, whether digital or not.** There are plans to set up a new iteration of this grant – a Sector Transformation Grant.

This was recognized when the NAC launched the Sustain the Arts (stART) Fund in 2021 with funds from the private sector. The aim of the fund is **to build capabilities of small and young organisations in areas such as fundraising, governance and impact reporting.** Through initiatives like this, the NAC is also

While established organisations might be looking at business transformation, small organisations have different struggles.

trying to unlock more funding for the arts from the private sector – part of a plan towards long-term sustainability for the arts sector.

Sustainability, innovation, capacity-building for arts organisations and digital technology are clearly part of the “Emerging Stronger” strategy. These would likely inform the NAC’s thinking as it begins work on a new national Arts Plan to be unveiled in 2023. In preparation for this, the NAC has begun a process of more consultations with the arts community and stakeholders in the arts.

Freelancers and Self-Employed Persons

Over the past decade, arts and creative professionals have been raising awareness about the precarity of creative labour, and the government has gradually responded with initiatives such as **a division for freelancers** under the National Trades Union Congress (U FSE) and the NAC’s Arts Resource Hub which provides information, networking, and co-working spaces.



Despite these efforts, arts freelancers – who include artists, art educators and extracurricular activity instructors in schools, technical and stage production crew – continue to feel precarious. This was exacerbated during the pandemic.

In early 2020 in particular, there was a flurry of activity on social media as affected artists felt helpless and unsure where to turn to for support. **A longstanding issue is the lack of unions or associations to represent the interests of such a diverse group of freelancers;** increasingly, the community also includes those in related creative sectors such as media and film. There is no umbrella theatre union or visual artists association dedicated to advocating for arts and creative professionals, though there is a Singapore Drama Educators Association, an Actors Society, a Musicians Society, a network of creative producers and artists called ProducersSG, and other scattered associations.

The lack of an umbrella association means that **common interests shared across the arts and creative professionals cannot be represented at top-level conversations with policymakers.** However, as the gig economy becomes mainstream, the government now understands that in Singapore there are a growing number of precarious workers who included hire-car drivers and food delivery personnel. While many arts freelancers believe that their work conditions are different from these other sectors, because of concern about gig workers as a whole, **arts and creative freelancers were included at the start in the government’s Covid support schemes for Self-Employed Persons.** Among the first support packages to be rolled

out was a Temporary Relief Scheme for those who had lost jobs, and soon after, in April 2020, a new Self-Employed Income Relief Scheme was unveiled, giving the possibility of receiving three quarterly payouts of \$3,000 to Self-Employed Persons who had lost work due to Covid. Only those who have declared income through the annual tax return or by registration with the national retirement fund scheme, the Central Provident Fund, were eligible.

Two years since Covid hit, there is still no formal association to advocate for better protection for arts and creative freelancers but this is not for lack of trying. On the ground, representatives from different associations and interest groups are exploring the possibility of forming an "alliance" of creative professionals.

Space for the Arts

On the NAC's website, there is a page on "**Staying Resilient and Emerging Stronger**" where their priority areas post-Covid are outlined (National Arts Council, 2022):

- **Growing and sustaining the arts**
- **Supporting the Major Companies**
- **Diversifying sources of funding for the arts, including private sources**
- **Managing and activating spaces for the arts**
- **Profiling the arts sector (championing the arts)**
- **Engaging the arts community**



The previous sections have outlined the ways that the NAC has embarked on most of these priority areas. A final area of note, is the **NAC's plan for securing spaces for the arts – developing venues, studios and places for making and presenting art – in a country with expensive real estate**. While there is a stock of "Arts Housing" buildings at its disposal, the NAC is looking into other ways of using available real estate, such as **partnerships with the private sector**. A visible example is a cluster of industrial warehouses called Tanjong Pagar Distripark which is privately owned; a few galleries had already leased units there, and in January 2022 the Singapore Art Museum was temporarily located there with much fanfare. On the opposite end of the spectrum is the unfortunate closure of a beloved independent arts institution in the heart of the city – The Substation, an arts incubator which had to vacate the NAC-owned premises in July 2022 after a 30-year history. The NAC plans to redevelop the building – a former power substation with a distinctive brick façade – for future purposes; the building will be renovated, but The Substation will not return even though it continues to exist as an arts company. This development caused much consternation among the arts community, raising questions about how exactly the NAC plans to use and manage all the other arts buildings that it holds. **Hence, the impermanence of arts spaces emerged as a question during the pandemic.**

Conclusion

The covid-19 pandemic disrupted the arts sector in Singapore, but the country's top-down model of cultural governance helped many companies and artists survive.

Even before the pandemic, the arts community and the government were already concerned about questions of **long-term sustainability, audience growth, and digital innovation in the arts**. These conversations are sure to continue as NAC develops a new arts plan, coinciding with the country's attempts to "emerge stronger" from the pandemic. The government will retain a strong hand in arts development.

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SUPERDIVERSITY AND CULTURAL POLICIES IN POST-PANDEMIC SINGAPORE

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Constitutional multiculturalism in Singapore is reflected by four racial categories: Chinese, Malay, Indian and Others, known as the **CMIO multicultural construct or the CMIO multiracial framework**. This framework has been continuously highlighted by leading scholars Chan, Chua, Yeoh, Kwok and Rocha before covid-19, calling for our national discourse to enlarge the acceptance of different diversities and address existing issues, complexities beyond a simplistic CMIO multiculturalism (Chan et al., 2020; Chua, 2003; Chua & Kwok, 2018; Rocha & Yeoh, 2020). The pandemic only served to augment ongoing multiplicities in global, transversal, migratory, cultural and digital realities of diversity. On the other hand, cultural policies seem to steer away from the CMIO multiracial framework and place heavy emphasis where diversities are inherent to Singapore's identity (National Arts Council, 2018a). This tracker aims to provide a glimpse of the evolution of cultural policy in Singapore and its roles in diversity before the new Arts Plan 2023-2027 is announced.



Tracking diversity and multiculturalism in Singapore's cultural policies

National Arts Council (NAC) has commenced engagements with spaces, arts audiences and patrons in preparation for the next arts plan 2023 to 2027 (National Arts Council, 2022). Although public participation and community engagements were pre-planned, disrupted the arts, live performances, collaborative events, international and cross-cultural hybridisations of arts, cultural and heritage events. During the pandemic, the council launched the **Arts and Culture Resilience Package to promote digitalisation, enhance digital capabilities as well as provide short term business recovery grants to ease arts companies through the constant shifts between in-person and digital presentations** (National Arts Council, 2021). Under the resilience package, grants such as Capability Development Scheme for the Arts and the Digital Presentation Grant for the Arts were reactionary measures and time-limited schemes which were provided in addition to an existing Digitalisation

This above is the current stage of development for cultural policies in Singapore, and the following explores an evolutionary track of how cultural policies discuss, represent and exemplify diversities through the arts. Singapore's cultural policies often take the form of plans, reports, documents and policy statements. This tracker will refer to all the above as cultural policies for ease of reference for the reader.

Fund. NAC has been developing digital forms and mediums before the pandemic, hence efforts to build digital diversities and digital engagements are multiplied with the above time-limited schemes.

Singapore's first cultural policy, *Report by the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts 1989*, attempted to regulate the arts and culture according to the genres of artforms such as separate plans for the performing arts, visual arts, literary arts and heritage (Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts, 1989). The strategies focused primarily on setting up cultural infrastructure, facilities, instituting governance and most significantly, the establishment of an arts council. Other aspects of the policy emphasised how the arts improve quality of life, deepen inter-cultural sensitivities, and build a collective Singaporean identity with varied multilingual and multicultural artforms (Hoe, 2018d; Wee, 2002).

Singapore's second set of cultural policy, *Renaissance City Plan (RCP)*, has three editions 2000, 2003, 2008, which expanded the arts and heritage to include all creative industries, media and design (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2000; National Arts Council, 2008). Commonly referred to as the RCPs, this set of policies advocated for Singapore to be a global city for the arts and attracted much international scholarly discourse. Kong identified many challenges in design, arts, business sectors, particularly how civil and public thoughts and expectations are sometimes in contrary to the diverse characteristics of creatives (Kong, 2012). Bereson criticised the RCPs, especially how bureaucratic political agendas cultivate languages to generate more economic activity and provision for diversities but little evidence of critical discourse (Bereson, 2003). Ooi affirmed the widening global diversities which the RCPs seek to embrace, but at the same time acknowledged prevailing limitations on socio-political, civil society, religion and gender issues (Ooi, 2010). This is reiterated in Hoe's study on Singapore as a contemporary arts hub, that the government's desires to internationalise the arts "is still narrowly boxed within out-of-bounds markers" (Hoe, 2018b).

Singapore's third cultural policy *The Report of the Arts and Culture Strategic Review 2012* set the precedents of conducting in-person as well as online public surveys, focus groups, arts consultative groups and implementing public feedback as part of its policy strategic directions (National Arts Council, 2012). Its methodology is non-bureaucratic, non-discriminatory and open to diverse opinions through diverse means. The outcome was a policy vision to be "a nation of cultured and gracious people, at home with our heritage, proud of our Singaporean identity" and "to bring arts and culture to everyone, everywhere, everyday" (ACSR Report 2012, p15, 26). Communities, neighbourhoods and the everyday person were the focal receiving point of this cultural policy. Hoe expounded that Singapore's cultural policies such as the 2012 report are instrumentalised to cultivate social values and community building (Hoe, 2018c). Chong argued that such community is "conjured up imaginations" by the state and the new policy is nothing but "a return to the traditional building role of the arts" (Chong, 2014, p29).

An empirical study conducted by Trivic et. al investigated the impacts of Arts

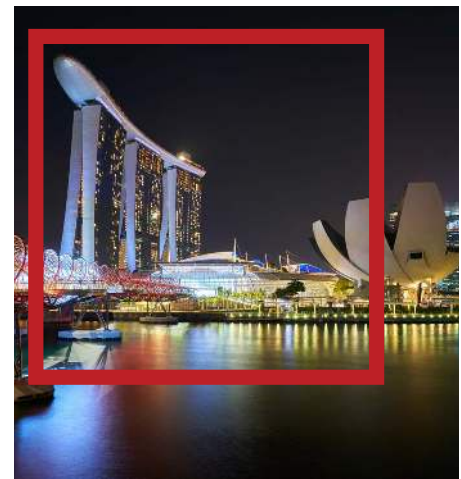


and Nodes, a National Arts Council initiative which collaborates with local arts groups, artists and collectives, neighbourhood institutions, community clubs, libraries, public spaces, venues and parks in Singapore. Trivic's team concentrated on spatial, social and participation outcomes. They found that 87% of surveyed participants thought that arts and cultural programmes "enhanced their appreciation of other cultures, which is essential for building cohesive multi-cultural society" (Trivic et al., 2020, p22).

Singapore first three cultural policies point towards how arts and culture are instrumental to building a cohesive collective identity that embodies multiplicities and diversities. Singapore's current cultural policy *Our SG Arts Plan 2018-2022* also points towards a multiculturalism that is a singular, unified collective identity instead of a multiculturalism which distinguishes separate ethnicities, or seeks to integrate minorities into a majority. Studies by the National Arts Council such as *Impacting Communities through the Arts I and II* stressed how the arts are channels of intercultural experiences directed towards social good and social capital (National Arts Council, 2018a, 2018b, 2019).

Interrogating Singapore's evolving diversity

As a post-colonial country, Singapore's policies on multiculturalism drew on British antecedents of administration and governance. Racial categories were first proposed in 1871 by the British for the purpose of a census count in Malaya and the Straits Settlements, which included Singapore at that time (Hirschman, 1987; Merewether, 1892). Forty-five ethnic categories existed in the 1871 census, with Europeans and Eurasians placed at the top of the classification table. Hirschman interpreted this ethnic classification as a hierarchical structure based on social status, with whites on top followed by the Asians whom they came to know through common social circles, such as Straits-born Chinese (Hirschman, 1987). **Racial categories narrowed even further and by 1957, only four racial categories remained – Chinese, Malays, Indians and Others (CMIO). This began to be known as the CMIO** multicultural construct which has been in use up till today (Hill & Lian, 1995; Hirschman, 1987). From 1959, Singapore's ruling party has used the CMIO racial categories as an identity marker to determine equity in the implementation of many policies, such as housing allocations proportionate to racial ratios, immigration policies endorsing all four races, education in all four languages, and supporting the arts from all four cultures (Chua, 2003; Narayana, 2004). **The relevance and understanding of CMIO multiculturalism as a framework may have divergent sets of implications corresponding to trajectories of evolution in society, creative arts, culture, technology developments and population.**



Like other global cities, Singapore is experiencing characteristics of superdiversity, interculturalism and cultural pluralism as people become increasingly biracial, bicultural or multicultural, many having a range of hyphenated identities such as Chinese-Indian-Catholic or Indian-Malay-Muslim (Abdou & Geddes, 2017; Chan, 1971; Chan et al., 2019; Kastoryano, 2018).

Vertovec (2007) suggests that superdiversity is a summary term that illustrates the need for a multi-dimensional perspective on diversity, to move beyond ethnic representations and to recognise the coalescence of factors such as immigration trends, countries of origins, multilingualism, diverse religions, different types of migration channels, and immigration statuses, complexities in gender, access to employment and transnationalism. Vertovec listed the following forms of differentiation that were critical elements to diversity: "ethnicity, religious affiliation and practice, regional and local identities in places of origin, kinship, clan or tribal affiliation, political parties and movements, and other criteria of collective belonging" (1031).

Although Vertovec's superdiversity was used with respect to the UK from the 1990s, such diversities were already present in Singapore before 1990s and is more prevalent nowadays due to global physical and digital mobilities. Chinese descendants of the early migrants and current migrants have origins from different provinces in China. **Hailing from China, these Chinese may speak one or a combination of Mandarin with their origin dialect such as Teochew, Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Hainanese, Foochow, Henghua, Shanghainese and Hokchia just to name a few major dialects that can be found in Singapore.** There is significant diversity amongst the Singaporean Chinese, descendants of first generation Singaporean Chinese and new Chinese immigrants. **Similarly, the Malay language spoken in Singapore constituted the Johor-Riau dialect, which can be further distinguished into colloquial Malay and standard Malay, Javanese, Boyanese and others (Jain, 2021).** Indians in Singapore were also highly diverse, speaking Tamil, Malayalee, Hindi, Sikh, Punjabi, Urdu, Hindustani, Gujarati, Singhi, Sinhalese and other dialects (Ministry of Trade and Industry & Department of Statistics, n.d.). In religion, Islam alone has several traditions within the faith, such as Sufi, Barelvi, Sunni, Shi'a, Ibadi, Ahmadiyya. Christianity has even more denominations such as Methodist, Presbyterian, Evangelistic, Charismatic, Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Baptist, etc. **Major religions and their various factions are present in the modern context of Singapore's society, and the diversities are multiplied with the breadth of origins among new migrants to Singapore.**

Vertovec (2007) discussed how different migration channels and immigration statuses affect how people group themselves, where they live, how long they can stay, access to public services and resources etc. He highlighted that the key feature of superdiversity was the possibility of widely differing statuses within groups of the same ethnic or national origin. For example, among the Chinese ethnic group in Singapore, there are Singaporean citizens, permanent residents, expatriates, workers with employment pass or S-pass, migrant workers with work permits and undocumented migrants. Therefore, simple ethnicity-focused approaches or racial categories within conventional multiculturalism were becoming inadequate and inappropriate for dealing with individual needs. In addition to conventional migration statuses such as new citizens, workers, students, spouses and family members, new types of migration status should be considered too.



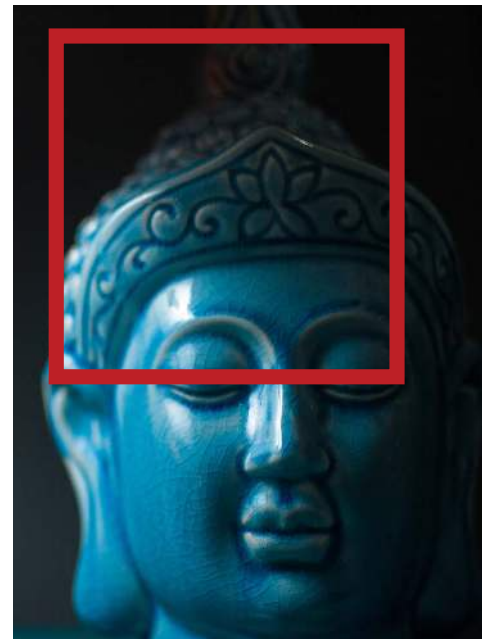
Superdiversity as a possible investigation lens for cultural policies

In one of Vertovec's keynote addresses, he stressed that 'super' in superdiversity means superseding and not powerful. Superdiversity has been used as a springboard across different social sciences and humanities subjects to discuss new methodologies to understand complexities for migration, social identities, social formations and socio-linguistics (Vertovec, 2016). Superdiversity can be used as "a descriptive concept, stimulating multi-perspective, multi-variable approaches toward the study of complex social environments" (37:43).

Covid-19 magnified digital diversities and the need for cultural policies to develop, empower and position the arts as conduits to convey and reflect such diversities.

Kukulska-Hulme and Pegrum (2018) noted that the internet and social media are superdiverse spaces, and there was a growth of superdiverse linguistic phenomena such as urban and online language mixing. They suggested that the concept of superdiversity was linked with mobility through physical travel and the digital technologies which enable communications during/after physical travels, as well as for those who do not travel. Jacquemet (2005) suggests that superdiversity emerges at the point of "intersection between mobile people and mobile texts" (261). **Daily interactions in-person and online, whether internet, social media or other virtual platforms, are naturally superdiverse linguistic settings as they involve movement between multiple communicative modes.** People are increasingly diverse in multiple respects in both physical and digital mobilities, and "are interacting in linguistically mixed ways in both offline urban spaces and online social spaces" (Pegrum et al. 3).

The upcoming Arts Plan 2023-2027 will no doubt reflect new developments in the arts post-pandemic, as well as findings by National Arts Council's report on **Digital Arts Consumption during covid-19** (Kantar Public, 2020).

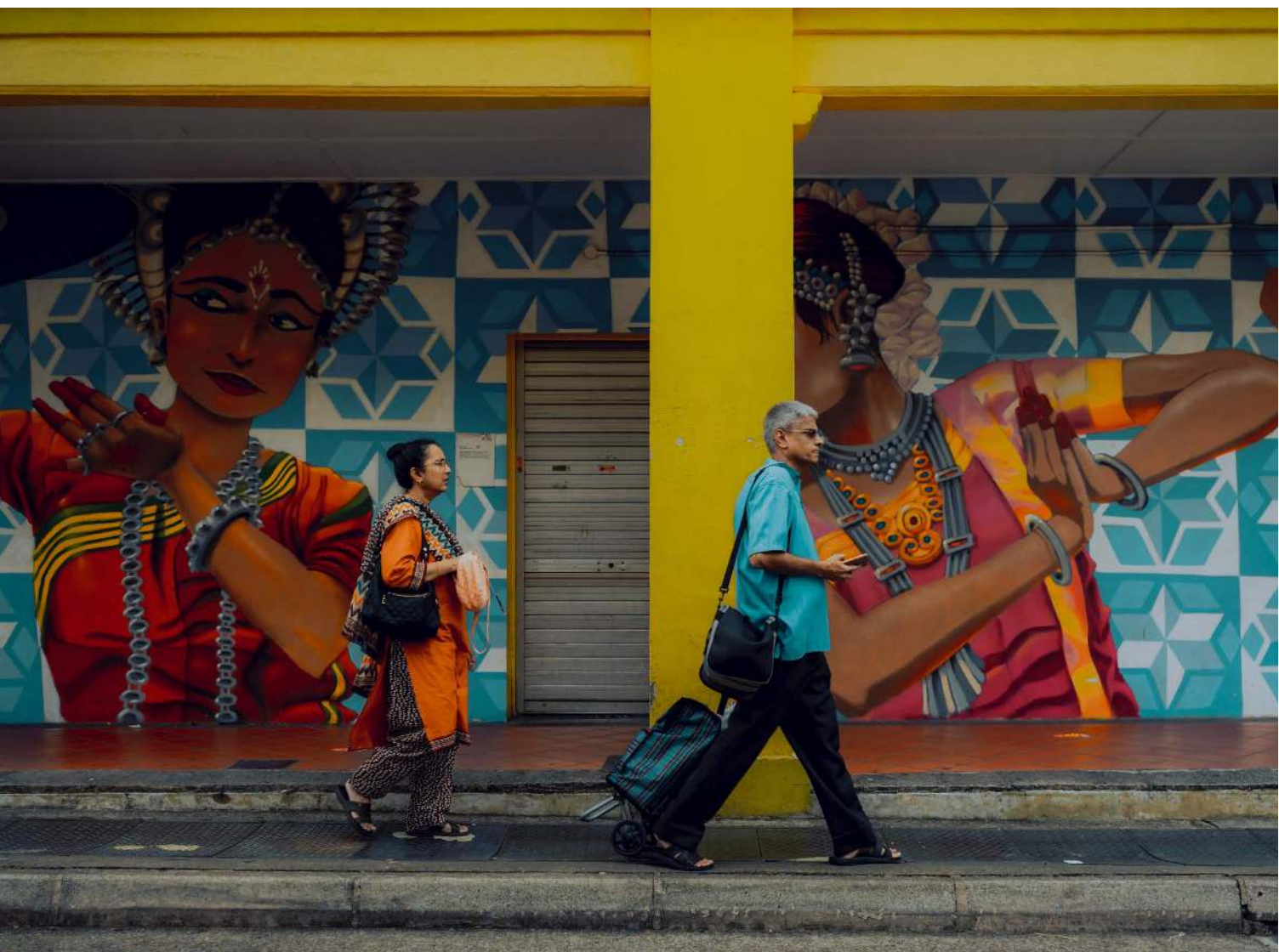


The National Arts Council's report on Digital Arts Consumption during covid-19 was commissioned during the pandemic to understand behaviours and sentiments of Singapore's public and art audiences in order to inform Singapore arts community on resilience and to emerge stronger after the pandemic. One of its key findings was 80% of digital arts consumers say that they would continue online consumption after the pandemic (p3).

Perhaps Singapore has always been diverse/superdiverse, but we did not recognise it in the way we do now. Superdiversity may not be just a phenomenon, but a possible way to examine multiculturalism and the arts. With increased digital diversities brought about by technologies, digital information and communication channels, **intercultural dialogues can take place over real and virtual spaces** (Pegrum et al., 2018; Vertovec, 2007).

The impacts of covid-19 accelerated the frequency and demand of online art consumption, widened digital access for both artists and audiences alike and amplified the importance of digital producers, studios and talents.

Digitalisation also open the gateway to digital diversities, digital communications and digital mobilities. Superdiversity could be a possible lens to read and investigate Singapore's multiculturalism, diversities and cultural policies.



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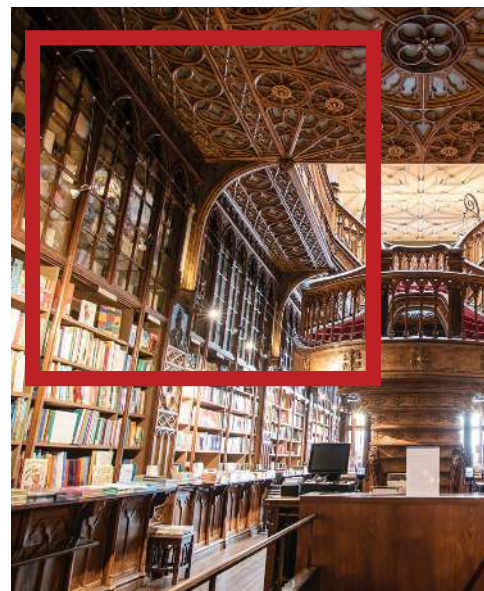
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Michelle Loh

Michelle is currently Lecturer at LASALLE College of the Arts Singapore, Faculty of Fine Arts, Media and Creative Industries. She received the prestigious LASALLE Academic Qualifications Fund scholarship and is currently pursuing her doctorate studies at the University of Western Australia. She has a Masters (Arts Management) from City University London, and BSc. (Real Estate) from National University of Singapore.

Michelle Loh is a bilingual arts manager and researcher in arts management and cultural policy. She serves on the executive committee of Poetry Festival Singapore and the organising committee of the biennial Singapore Literature Conference from 2015 to 2022. Her research interests in traditional Chinese music, cultural policy and arts management led her to be the Principal Investigator of *Tracking Creative Developments in Traditional Chinese Music in Singapore 1999 – 2015*, supported by National Arts Council Research & Development Grant and LASALLE College of the Arts Major Research Fund. Michelle was an arts manager at National University of Singapore Centre for the Arts where she played a key role in the establishment, inception and management of Singapore's leading Chinese Instrumental Examination system. She managed numerous performances at the annual NUS Arts Festival and also organised international concert tours to the UK, Switzerland, Malaysia. Michelle has a music education in classical piano and Chinese pipa. She taught and performed in both instruments, organised traditional/classical/fusion music performances and international music tours.

Prior to working in Singapore, Michelle worked in London in the 2000s. Her project with Late Nights @ Tate series brought in new audiences and visitors through a variety of music events. She was also a researcher with the International Intelligence on Culture in the areas of cultural policy and cultural



indicators in European countries.

Publications:

- 'Language: Audiences for Singapore's poetry festival' in *Routledge Companion to Audiences and the Performing Arts*, Eds. Matthew Reason, Lynne Conner, Katya Johanson and Ben Walmsley, Routledge (2022)
- Co-Editor of *Traditional Chinese Music in Contemporary Singapore*, Pagesetters (2020)
- 'Music Examinations: Results of the new Paperchase', *Traditional Chinese Music in Contemporary Singapore*, eds. Michelle Loh and Lum Yan Sing, Pagesetters (2020)
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THINK TANK CULTURE POST COVID-19

In April 2020, in order to contribute to the development of **evidence-based cultural policies** – applied research to serve policy design – promoting and advocating for innovative policies and practices in the cultural and creative sectors in the post Covid-19 era, ENCATC set up a new Think Tank bringing together culture and education institutions from across Europe willing to contribute both to the better understanding and deeper knowledge of Covid-19's various impacts. In addition, the newly established **Think Tank Culture Post covid-19** will be crucial for engaging the cultural management and policy community with other networks and stakeholders **in a global scale** to transform the conversation around climate change and translate it into **research-based policy actions**. To this end, the Think Tank meetings will be open to representatives America and Asia and thus to integrate in the Think Tank best practices and innovative ideas to tackle the climate change challenges from other world regions perspectives.

The Think Tank brings together in a global conversation **professionals, academics, researchers and representatives of EU cultural networks and universities**. The common goal is to gather, analyse, and come away with robust findings for evidence-based policy recommendations that could allow the Cultural sector to better navigate during the current and future turbulent times.

Coordinated by ENCATC, the Think Tank is currently gathering the following **35 organisations/networks**: Culture Action Europe; Erasmus University Rotterdam; European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers'; Organisations (ECCO); Fondazione Scuola dei beni e delle attività culturali; King's College London; Michael Culture; On The Move; University of Salento; European; Choral Association - Europa Cantat; European Cultural Foundation; European Music Council (EMC); Future for Religious Heritage (FRH); The Heritage Council of Ireland; Association des Centres culturels de rencontre (ACCR); Bern University of Applied Sciences; Circostrada; ELIA; EUNIC Global; Europa Nostra; European Association of Archaeologists (EAA); European Network for Conservation-Restoration Education (ENCoRE); European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC); European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH); European Union of Music Competitions for Youth (EMCY); European Federation of Associations of Industrial and Technical Heritage (E-FAITH); Europeana Foundation; M International (JMI); National Heritage Board of Latvia; Network of European Museum Organisations; Organisation of World Heritage Cities (OWHC); Pôle patrimoine - Pays de la Loire; Réseau Européen de Musique Ancienne (REMA); University of Barcelona, and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).



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It is an independent membership organisation gathering over 100 higher education institutions and cultural organisations in over 40 countries. ENCATC was founded in 1992 to represent, advocate and promote cultural management and cultural policy education, professionalise the cultural sector to make it sustainable, and to create a platform of discussion and exchange at the European and international level.

ENCATC holds the status of an NGO in official partnership with UNESCO, of observer to the Steering Committee for Culture of the Council of Europe.

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